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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine and compare the opinions and immediate plans of 1972-73-74 and 1982-83-84 graduates of Virginia Western Community College (VWCC). Graduates were asked to indicate their opinions of the college's academic instruction, counseling services, faculty advising, and social activities; to provide an overall rating of VWCC; to indicate whether they would recommend their program; and to state their immediate plans. Study findings, based on an 80% response rate, included the following: (1) in comparison to the 1972-73-74 group, the 1982-83-84 graduates gave higher ratings to academic instruction, VWCC's social activities, and the college as a whole; (2) the later group rated counseling services significantly lower than the earlier group; (3) 35% of the later graduates rated academic advising as "fair" or "poor"; (6) compared to the 1972-73-74 group, more 1982-83-84 graduates entered the job market and fewer indicated transfer plans; and (7) over 90% of all graduates said they would recommend their program of study. The survey instrument is appended. (LAL)

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ED 272 257

A COMPARATIVE FOLLOW-UP
STUDY OF 1972-73-74 AND
1982-83-84 GRADUATES

OIR 102-85

BY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines and compares the opinions and immediate plans of 1972-73-74 and 1982-83-84 graduates at Virginia Western Community College (VWCC). Approximately 80% of the graduates responded to the survey. Results of the study indicate that more 1982-83-84 graduates entered employment with fewer recent graduates indicating plans to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The 1982-83-84 graduates rated academic instruction, social activities, and an overall rating of the college higher than the 1972-73-74 graduates. No differences in ratings of the two graduate groups were found in their ratings of (1) advising by faculty and (2) a recommendation of the graduates' program of study. Lower ratings for counseling services by counselors were cited by the 1982-83-84 graduates than the 1972-73-74 graduates.

INTRODUCTION

The success of VWCC depends on the successes of students and, in particular, the success of the graduates. Since 1972, VWCC's Office of Institutional Research has studied the characteristics, attitudes, and immediate plans of graduates. This study proposed to summarize the results of this on-going study by examining and comparing the opinions and immediate plans of 1972-73-74 and 1982-83-84 graduates. Results of the study propose to provide data for better decision-making for understanding and promoting academic services for students.

METHODOLOGY

The data for the study were self-reported on VWCC's OIR Graduate Follow-Up Questionnaire (Appendix). Approximately 80% of all graduates completed the questionnaire. Responses of the graduates were combined and reported in two groups, 1972-73-74 graduates and 1982-83-84 graduates.

RESULTS

Graduates were asked to rate their opinions toward the college's academic instruction; counseling services by counselors; counseling/advising by faculty; social activities; overall; immediate plans of graduates; and a recommendation of the college to persons seeking to complete the same program of study of the graduates.

Table 1 compares the respondents' rating of VWCC's academic instruction.

TABLE 1
GRADUATES' RATINGS OF ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
SUPERIOR	159	19.4%	156	22.5%
GOOD	570	69.4%	486	70.1%
FAIR	82	10.0%	44	6.4%
POOR	10	1.2%	7	1.0%
	821	100.0%	693	100.0%

An analyses using Chi Square ($\chi^2 = 7.935$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) rejected the null hypothesis indicating changes between ratings by 1972-73-74 graduates and 1982-83-84 graduates. The 1982-83-84 graduates provided significantly more "superior" and "good" ratings than 1972-73-74 graduates.

Table 2 indicates graduates' ratings of counseling services by counselors.

TABLE 2
GRADUATES' RATINGS OF COUNSELING SERVICES

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
SUPERIOR	101	12.5%	65	9.1%
GOOD	354	44.0%	258	35.9%
FAIR	225	28.0%	268	37.3%
POOR	125	15.5%	127	17.7%
	805	100.0%	718	100.0%

The 1982-83-84 graduates rated counseling services significantly lower ($\chi^2 = 21.34$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) than the 1972-73-74 graduates. Several factors have been hypothesized in discerning these ratings. First, the need for counseling services to provide more positive experiences to students is found throughout community college literature, and low ratings at VWCC should not be viewed as being unique. Second, counseling is very complex, and is presently understaffed. Finally, many questions exist concerning who the graduates were rating: counselors, faculty, or staff. In any case, efforts should be made toward improving these ratings.

Student ratings of counseling/advising by faculty are examined in Table 3.

TABLE 3
COUNSELING/ADVISING BY FACULTY

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
SUPERIOR	94	17.9%	124	17.5%
GOOD	261	49.9%	335	47.1%
FAIR	126	24.0%	195	27.4%
POOR	43	8.2%	57	8.0%
	524	100.0%	711	100.0%

Although a Chi Square Test ($\chi^2 = 1.835$, $df = 3$, $p > .05$) indicated no significant changes between the

ratings of 1972-73-74 and 1982-83-84 graduates, improvements in these services should always be a goal at VWCC. The fact that approximately 35% of recent graduates indicated "fair" or "poor" ratings implies a need for more positive experiences.

Table 4 provides graduates' ratings of social activities of the college.

TABLE 4
GRADUATES' RATINGS OF SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
SUPERIOR	38	5.0%	24	3.6%
GOOD	230	30.1%	208	31.4%
FAIR	279	36.6%	314	47.5%
POOR	216	28.3%	116	17.5%
	763	100.0%	662	100.0%

A significant improvement in the 1982-83-84 graduates' ratings of the social activities of the college was noted ($\chi^2 = 29.442$, $df = 3$, $p. < .05$). These improved ratings resulted from the addition of tennis courses, athletic fields, student activity coordinator, more social activities, etc.; however, over 50% of the graduates still rate these activities as "fair" or "poor" indicating that additional improvement is needed in this area.

Table 5 indicates the graduates' overall rating of the college.

TABLE 5
GRADUATES' OVERALL RATINGS OF THE COLLEGE

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
SUPERIOR	93	11.4%	85	12.1%
GOOD	580	71.4%	543	77.2%
FAIR	128	15.7%	69	9.8%
POOR	12	1.5%	6	0.9%
	813	100.0%	703	100.0%

The data indicated that approximately 90% of the 1982-83-84 graduates gave a "superior" or "good" overall rating of the college. A Chi Square Test ($\chi^2 = 13.3$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) indicated a significant change for more positive ratings by the 1982-83-84 graduates than 1972-73-74 graduates. These positive ratings are very significant and indicate very positive opinions of most graduates towards VWCC.

The immediate plans of graduates after graduation is one of the most important factors in evaluating the success of VWCC graduates. Table 6 provides the immediate plans of graduates by year of graduation.

TABLE 6
IMMEDIATE PLANS BY YEAR OF GRADUATION

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES*	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
TRANSFER	237	31.3%	222	22.0%
EMPLOYMENT IN- FIELD)-OF-STUDY	348	46.1%	546	54.0%
EMPLOYMENT OUT-OF- FIELD)-OF-STUDY	38	5.0%	123	12.2%
OTHER**	133	17.6%	120	11.8%
	756	100.0%	1011	100.0%

* This question has significantly more responses because major efforts through the division chairman have been made to identify the immediate plans of VWC graduates.

** Other represents responses such as marriage, travel, entering military service, etc.

A Chi Square Test ($\chi^2 = 54.2$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) indicated significant changes in graduates' immediate plans. More 1982-83-84 graduates than 1972-73-74 graduates took immediate employment instead of engaging in other activities such as homemaker, enter military service, travel, marriage, etc. Although fewer 1982-83-84 graduates indicated transfer plans to other four-year colleges, further analyses of the types of degrees (A.A., A.S., AAS, or Diploma) attained by graduates and their immediate plans are recommended.

Finally, in order to find a measure of graduates' satisfaction concerning their program of study, each graduate was asked whether or not they would recommend their program of study. Table 7 indicates the graduates' responses.

TABLE 7
GRADUATES' RECOMMENDATIONS OF PROGRAM OF STUDY

	1972-73-74 GRADUATES		1982-83-84 GRADUATES	
	N	PERCENT	N	PERCENT
YES	753	94.1%	661	91.7%
NO	47	5.9%	60	8.3%
	800	100.0%	721	100.0%

The data indicated that over 90% of the graduates would recommend their programs of study to others. A Chi Square Test ($X^2 = 3.11$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$) indicate no significant difference in the opinions of 1972-73-74 graduates and 1982-83-84 graduates.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study compared the opinions of 1972-73-74 and 1982-83-84 graduates. Approximately 80% of the graduates responded to the study; and the results are summarized as follows:

1. Higher ratings for academic instruction by the 1982-83-84 graduates were noted.
2. The 1982-83-84 graduates rated counseling services by counselors significantly lower than 1972-73-74 graduates.

3. Although more positive ratings for academic advising by 1982-83-84 graduates than 1972-73-74 graduates were identified, the fact that over 35% of the graduates rated these activities as "fair" or "poor" indicated a need for improvements.
4. The 1982-83-84 graduates indicated higher ratings for the college's social activities than 1972-73-74 graduates.
5. The 1982-83-84 graduates gave a significantly higher overall rating of the college than the 1972-73-74 graduates.
6. More 1982-83-84 graduates entered the job market than 1972-73-74 graduates, and fewer 1982-83-84 graduates indicate transfer plans to other four-year colleges.
7. Although no significant changes in the percent of graduates recommending their program of study were discerned, the fact that over 90% of all graduates would recommend their program of study indicated very positive attitudes of graduates toward their programs of study.

The study concluded that the college is continuously improving academic programs and courses. Improvements have been made in providing students with more social activities. Improvements in counseling services and better academic advising by faculty should be goals for the late 1980's.



VIRGINIA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

3995 Colonial Avenue, S.W., P.O. Box 14545, Roanoke, Virginia 24038, Phone: 753/582-7283

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Dear Graduate:

Congratulations! Graduation undoubtedly marks for you the completion of an important step in your occupational and educational plans. Hopefully, your work at VWCC has been both pleasant and rewarding and has provided you with the background you need for further advancement toward realization of your goals.

We are interested in how you feel about your experiences at VWCC. Please take a few minutes and complete the attached questionnaire. By doing so, you can provide us with invaluable assistance in assessing VWCC's weakness and strengths.

Although your social security number is requested, it is used for statistical purposes only. Your responses will be held in strictest confidence and will be combined with those of other graduates in reporting the results of this study.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Charles A. Houston'.

Charles A. Houston, Director
Office of Institutional Research

PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON BACK AND RETURN IN THE
ENCLOSED STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

SURVEY QUESTIONS CONCERNING YOUR RECENT OCCUPATIONAL AND/OR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Social Security Number _____

I. MY IMMEDIATE PLANS ARE TO: (check all that apply)

A. EMPLOYMENT:

- | | | |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Be employed in field of study | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 2. Be employed in related field of study | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 3. Be employed out of field of study | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 4. Remain in present position | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 5. Be unemployed (looking for job) | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 6. Be unemployed (not looking for job) | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |

NAME OF EMPLOYING ORGANIZATION:

 (city) (state)

SALARY PER YEAR: _____	to 9,999.00	_____	18 - 21,999.00
_____	10 - 13,999.00	_____	22 - 24,999.00
_____	14 - 17,999.00	_____	over 25,000.00

B. CONTINUE EDUCATION:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Return to VWCC | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |
| 2. Transfer to college/university | _____ Full-time | _____ Part-time |

NAME OF TRANSFER COLLEGE: _____

II. Please give your opinion about each of the following aspects of your VWCC experience. Mark only one answer for each aspect.

	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor
a. Shop and laboratory instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Academic instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Shop and laboratory facilities and equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. All other college facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Counseling given to students by counselors	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Advising given to students by faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Social activities	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Interest in students shown by faculty	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Registration procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Intramural program	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Academic standards	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Overall	☐	☐	☐	☐

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III. Would you recommend VWCC to a person seeking to complete the same program you studied? _____ Yes _____ No Specify reason(s): _____